

## Adult Education--National Programs Evaluation and Technical Assistance (CFDA No. 84.191)

### I. Legislation

Adult Education Act, Part D, Section 383, P.L. 85-620, as amended (20 U.S.C. 1212a-c) (expires September 30, 1997).

### II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>
1988	\$1,915,000
1989	1,976,000
1990	1,973,000
1991	2,927,587
1992	4,000,000
1993	3,928,000
1994	3,928,000
1995	3,900,000
1996	2,560,000

### III. Analysis of Program Performance

#### A. Goals and Objectives

The purpose of Adult Education National Programs is to help states evaluate the status and progress of adult education in achieving the purposes of the Adult Education Act. This program supports effective practice and efficient use of federal funds for adult education. The authorized activities are research, evaluation, technical assistance, development, demonstrations, and training. National Programs historically have represented 1.2 to 1.6 percent of Adult Education Act funding.

The goals of the Adult Education National Program are to:

- Build state and local capacity to manage, deliver, and evaluate adult education services;
- Support state-level professional development; and
- Support program improvement.

The principal users of National Programs material are members of Congress and their staffs, the Office of Management and Budget, the Secretary of Education and other senior officers, the Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, federal program managers, the state directors of Adult Education, national literacy organizations, local directors and instructors of adult education and literacy programs, and adult education researchers.

## **B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals**

### **Services Supported**

At the national level, projects and studies provide the information needed for national policymaking and for developing legislative proposals for adult basic education. At the state level, projects help program administrators improve the management and quality of their program through the development and use of an automated program accountability and reporting system, and the development and use of indicators of program quality. At the local level, projects and studies help program administrators expand access to programs and improve program quality by identifying effective recruitment, retention, instructional, and staff development practices.

To solicit ideas for the Department to consider in developing investments under the National Programs account, the Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education conducted a series of meetings and conference calls in 1996 with representatives from the adult basic education and literacy communities. Participants in these exchanges included the Council of State Directors of Adult Education, Commission on Adult Basic Education, Literacy Coalition, National Adult Education Staff Development Consortium, Laubach Literacy Action, Literacy Volunteers of America, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, National Association of Urban Literacy Coalitions, local adult education service providers, and State Literacy Resource Centers. The discussions focused on the purpose and goals of the National Programs account.

A summary of key FY 1995 and 1996 activities follows.

### **Evaluations**

**“What Works” Study for Adult Basic Education (ABE) Students.** The Department has awarded a contract to conduct a major evaluation of promising adult education basic skills programs for low-literate learners. In the first year of the study, the contractor thoroughly reviewed the literature and consulted with the study’s advisory panel and reading experts to gain information to be used to identify models of effective reading programs. The contractor then made site visits to observe how these models are implemented in the field. The next steps will be widespread consultation and interviews with adult education practitioners and administrators and with experts in evaluation methodology, and case studies of sites that have the characteristics identified in the models (both successful and unsuccessful sites). From these activities, the contractor will develop a final set of program and evaluation models for pilot testing in specific sites.

In the pilot-test phase, the contractor will test the program and evaluation models in about five sites that meet key elements in the effective programs model and are willing to participate in a rigorous evaluation. To validate the effectiveness of the programs in those sites, the Department will extend the evaluations of the pilot sites a second year. The national study phase will begin in year three, after the initial effects and feasibility of the models have been tested in the pilot sites. This phase will involve either a stratified sample or a purposively selected sample of projects that represent a broad range of types of local programs. The end result should be both validation of evaluation methodology for assessing “what works,” including under what circumstances the models work and don’t work, and identification, description, and validation of effective practices that can be widely used by ABE educators.

**“What Works” Study for Adult ESL Students.** Demand for ESL programs has grown tremendously in recent years. ESL enrollments have more than doubled since 1980, when they constituted less than 20 percent of all enrollments. Not every ESL student is disadvantaged academically; 53 percent report having at least a high school diploma or the equivalent in their native language. The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of instructional techniques and program methods developed to serve low-literate ESL learners, to evaluate assessment instruments, and to identify the key elements of effective programs. The study has two phases. The first phase consists of a survey of adult ESL programs in six states where 75 percent of ESL enrollment occurs, and site visits to selected programs. The second phase will relate instructional practices to participant outcomes in order to identify effective practices.

**Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Evaluation, Adult Education Study.**

This project supplements the Department of Health and Human Services’ JOBS Evaluation. Adult Education National Programs funds supported literacy and math achievement testing on a random sample of 3,000 JOBS treatment and control group participants at three sites, an augmented sample size, and an implementation and process study of local adult education providers for the treatment group. The first draft interim report from JOBS which described the program’s implementation and participant characteristics, was delivered in May 1994. The major impact report, based on two years of follow-up, is scheduled for 1997.

A separate report, *Educating Welfare Recipients for Employment and Empowerment*, profiles adult education programs in four communities that served welfare clients in innovative or promising ways. Common and exceptional features of these programs offer lessons to the many other adult education programs that attempt to teach welfare recipients and other highly disadvantaged adults the skills they need to succeed as workers, as parents, and as citizens.

**State Correctional Education Program Evaluation.** The State Correctional Education program is funded through a 10 percent set-aside of Adult Education Basic Grant funds and a 1 percent set-aside in the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act. In the past decade, the inmate population has risen sharply, doubling between 1982 and 1991. Illiteracy among the prison population is particularly high. Four out of five inmates do not have a high school diploma, and more than three of four lack basic reading and arithmetic skills. States are increasingly mandating participation in literacy programs by inmates in state prisons. In 1992, 17 states and the District of Columbia had mandatory literacy programs.

This study will build upon corrections surveys administered by the Department in 1993 to collect information from states and individual facilities on the provision of adult and vocational education services to inmates. Information will also be collected on program participants, assessment of literacy gains, and the academic and vocational education and support services provided. The study will also assess the effectiveness and impact of these services, including gains in literacy and job skills and socioeconomic outcomes where possible. The final report is expected in late 1998.

**National Evaluation of the Set-aside for Teacher Training and Innovation.** Section 353 of the Adult Education Act requires states to set aside 15 percent of their basic grant to support special projects and teacher training in adult education. The main goals of the evaluation were to (1) describe and assess the systems that states use in administering Section 353 funds in support of teacher training and the development and dissemination of special experimental demonstration projects and activities, and (2) assess the quality and usefulness of these activities in enhancing adult basic education services. The results of the evaluation are being used to offer recommendations on ways to ensure that federal

## Chapter 412-4

support for training and special projects in adult education offers maximum benefits to the field and results in more effective ways of educating adults. Results are reported in both a technical and a summary report.

**State Literacy Resource Center (SLRC)/Gateway Grant Evaluation.** The purpose of these studies was to review and analyze the SLRC program and the Gateway Grants program as they were implemented in the states. The studies yielded (1) a profile of each program with descriptions of their administrative structures and placements, operations, services, and participants, including analysis of how the programs vary along key dimensions and what factors may account for these variations; (2) information on problems faced by state in implementing and operating their SLRC and Gateway Grants programs; (3) an assessment of states' progress toward meeting the legislative goals and objectives of the program; (4) a summary of states' efforts to evaluate their programs' effectiveness; and (5) recommendations for states wishing to continue and improve their programs. A final report for each program was released in March 1997.

**Review of State Adult Education Allocations.** The purpose of this study was to evaluate the distribution of resources for adult education against general indicators of need for adult education programs and services to inform federal policy. It used information collected from state directors of adult education to describe the patterns of funding for adult education programs as well as policies and procedures used by states in distributing funds. The study showed how federal funds fit into state adult education systems. *The Allocation of Funds for Adult Education* was released in May 1995.

**Evaluation Data Syntheses for Adult Education Reauthorization.** This study synthesized all evaluation and research findings relevant to reauthorization of the Adult Education Act, including a description of the adult education target population, and information on the delivery of adult education services, the effectiveness of adult education programs and services, and alternatives to traditional adult education instructions. *Review of Adult Education Programs and their Effectiveness* was released in June 1995.

### Technical Assistance

**Mexico Border Project.** Under the auspices of this project, education agencies in the border states of Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas are cooperating with counterpart agencies in Mexico to provide literacy services. A bilateral plan to expand collaborative efforts at the national, state, and local program levels is being implemented. In addition, the U.S. border states are pilot-testing the educational curriculum developed with Mexico. Both the U.S. and Mexican adult education programs are collaborating in staff development and are sharing information on effective adult education practices. A final report is expected in 1997.

**Crossroad Cafe: Evaluation of the Fall 1995 Pilot Implementation.** This study examined the effectiveness of the 26-part instructional video series *Crossroads Cafe*, which is designed to teach English to nonnative English speakers. The instruction can be viewed over television or on video tapes. Ancillary print material corresponding to each of the episodes reinforces literacy concepts from the series. Three methods of delivering the course were tested: use of Crossroads Cafe materials in regularly scheduled English as a Second Language classes, use of videos in the home, and use of videos in the home supplemented by weekly group discussions. A copy of the report is available from the Division of Adult Education and Literacy's Clearinghouse.

**Technical Assistance Project for State Accountability and Assessment.** This three-year project was designed to improve the capacity of state education agencies (SEAs) to meet the administrative and evaluation requirements of the Adult Education Act. Project activity focused on four broad areas: (1) on-site technical assistance, (2) annual training institutes, (3) assistance in assessing and using administrative technology, and (4) dissemination of information and development of materials. In addition, the project developed and disseminated an administrative handbook for use by SEA staff and created and managed a Program Assessment and Information Center that maintains information on standardized tests and other assessment measures. The publication, *Evaluation Systems in the Adult Education Program: The Role of Quality Indicators*, will be available from Division of Adult Education and Literacy's Clearinghouse in 1997.

**Professional Development Assistance Project.** This three-year project, begun in September 1994, supports a variety of technical assistance activities to improve adult education professional development. Major activities in the first phase of the project were (1) reviewing existing networking processes; (2) developing and implementing a National Professional Development Network among staff development specialists in state departments of education, universities, local programs, and other organizations; and (3) developing new training modules for workplace literacy programs and for staff training practices. During the second phase, begun in September 1995, the project provided technical assistance to state and local staff trainers in using both previously developed and current training modules. The contractor also conducted a national training conference for staff trainers and state staff on advance practices in adult education training. A final report is expected in fall 1997.

**National ESL Clearinghouse on Literacy Education.** The National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education (NCLE), an adjunct Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouse, provides information, referral services, and publications about literacy instruction for limited-English proficient adults and out-of-school youth. NCLE also has a database of English as a Second Language (ESL) and native language literacy programs, and collects, analyzes, and abstracts educational documents for limited English proficient adults. Publications developed by the clearinghouse include the NCLE Notes, ERIC Digests, annotated bibliographies, and the Language Education series of monographs.

### **C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness**

Indicators of performance have been developed for the Adult Education National Program, but efforts have focused in recent years on expanding the scope and effectiveness of efforts to disseminate the study findings supported by National Programs. The DAEL has distributed copies of final reports through its clearinghouse; placed synopses of the studies in its newsletters, the *A.L.L. Point Bulletin*; cited important studies in *Thursday Notes*, its regular communication with state directors of adult education; and arranged for conference presentations of the findings. When a new system, such as the automated data collection and reporting system, was developed, presentations and implementation sessions were conducted at the National State Directors Conferences.

## **IV. Planned Studies**

The Department is working with the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) to conduct a National Research and Development Agenda Summit in April 1998. In preparation for this national meeting, the Department, NIFL, and NCSALL will establish a steering group representing business, community-based organizations, and the literacy field to serve in an advisory and policy setting role. In addition, adult literacy researchers will

## Chapter 412-6

draft a research paper, which will be reviewed by literacy experts and widely circulated to the field for comment via Internet and direct mailings, to give both state directors of adult education and adult learners an opportunity for input. The paper will then be revised to serve as a guiding document for studies supported under National Programs in future years.

### **V. Sources of Information**

1. Program files.
2. Putting Research Results to Work, A Guide to the Adult Education National Programs, 1988-1995 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

### **VI. Contacts for Further Information**

Program Operations:            Ronald S. Pugsley, (202) 205-8270

Program Studies:                Audrey Pendleton, (202) 401-3630